

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A1NEW YORK TIMES
12 June 1985

NAVY ORDERS CUT OF 50% IN ACCESS TO SECURITY DATA

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, June 11 — The Navy will halve the number of people who have access to secret information as a consequence of the spy case involving John A. Walker Jr. and two others, the Secretary of the Navy said today.

The Secretary, John F. Lehman Jr., said at a news conference here that he had instructed Navy commanding officers to take security clearances away immediately from 10 percent of the civilians and naval personnel who have them and to aim for a reduction of 50 percent "as soon as feasible."

Of the 1.01 million officers, enlisted personnel and civilian employees of the Navy, the Secretary said, 900,000 have security clearances of differing levels. In addition, there are 1.2 million employees of military contractors producing weapons or equipment for the Navy who also have clearances. He said he wanted all the security clearances cut in half.

Emphasis on Counterintelligence

Mr. Lehman, who was accompanied by Adm. James D. Watkins, the Chief of Naval Operations, also said the Navy Investigative Service would assign a large portion of its 900 investigators to counterintelligence inquiries instead of criminal investigations, such as those involving drug abuse.

Admiral Watkins, reading from a report prepared by the Office of Naval Intelligence, said that "some technical design information" in communications gear was presumed to have been compromised by Mr. Walker because he had access to that information as a communications specialist.

Congressional Inquiries Begin

Because of that, the admiral said, the Navy will accelerate the production of newly designed equipment to replace the compromised devices, which he did not identify.

Meanwhile, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence announced that it had begun a review of the "Soviet intelligence threat" and American efforts to counter it. A subcommittee of the House Government Operations Committee announced a similar in-

quiry.

Secretary Lehman, giving the first official account of the Navy's actions since Mr. Walker, a retired Navy warrant officer, was charged with espionage last month, said the Navy would no longer allow commanding officers to grant security clearances.

Although the Navy previously resisted pressures to centralize control over security clearances, the Secretary said the Department of the Navy would assume that authority. But he added that commanding officers would remain responsible for the reliability of those under their command.

Greater Use of Polygraphs

In addition, Mr. Lehman said the Navy would ask for legal authority to expand the use of polygraphs, or lie detectors, to help uncover spies. Congress has been skeptical of the efficacy of polygraphs and has permitted the Pentagon to conduct only a pilot program.

On a wider front, Mr. Lehman said the Navy would advocate laws that would force the Soviet Union to withdraw half its officials from the United States, would make peacetime espionage a military crime and would make possible the death penalty for espionage.

Mr. Walker, who is 47 years old, and three others — his son Michael, 22, a Navy yeoman; his older brother Arthur, 50, a retired Navy lieutenant commander, and his longtime friend, Jerry A. Whitworth, 45, a retired Navy radio man — have been arrested and charged with spying for the Soviet Union for nearly two decades.

Admiral Watkins said naval communications might have been damaged the most by the purported spy ring. Overall, he said, the damage has been "very serious" but "is not catastrophic."

The admiral said that lesser damage had been estimated in air, surface and antisubmarine warfare, but none to the submarines that carry ballistic missiles, which have been considered the least vulnerable weapon in the nation's nuclear arsenal.

Mr. Lehman was not asked at the news conference, and did not volun-

teer, to give specific ways in which Mr. Walker and the three others accused of espionage might have managed to evade detection for 18 years. Nor was the Secretary asked whether anyone would be held responsible.

A naval officer said later that it had been difficult to pinpoint how Mr. Walker and the other suspects had eluded suspicion. But he added that if responsibility could be fixed, it would be. Navy regulations hold ship captains and base commanding officers basically responsible.

Mr. Lehman said only that there had been "deficiencies in the security system" and added, "We can certainly do better in the Navy than we have." The first step, he added, was a message he sent Monday night to the Navy's admirals and commanding officers.

The message, a copy of which was made available at the news conference, ordered officers to "effect a Navy-wide reduction in security clearances of 10 percent immediately, with a goal of 50 percent as soon as feasible."

"If a specific job does not demand a clearance," Mr. Lehman's message said, "take it away."

Less Access to Security Areas

The Secretary also told commanding officers to limit the areas in which secret information was used and to "limit access to those spaces only by personnel with a need to know."

Mr. Lehman ordered a return to the practice, required by regulations but long ignored, of having two people dispose of secret material. Yeoman Walker, who was serving on the aircraft carrier Nimitz before his arrest, has been reported to have taken classified documents from the "burn bag."

In assessing the potential damage from the alleged spy ring, Admiral Watkins said Navy investigators had assumed the worst had occurred in trying to determine what information Mr. Walker might have given Soviet agents, meaning that whatever he had access to was considered compromised.

While the admiral said the loss of operational information was not considered to have been serious because it was useful only at the time, he said a Soviet ability to monitor Navy teletype messages would have filled in voids in their knowledge and enabled Soviet officials to understand better what they had observed in naval movements.

He asserted, however, that "very little technical design information relating to key weapons, sensors and platforms" had been presumed lost. By "platforms," the admiral was referring to aircraft, ships or submarines that carry weapons or sensors.

Some specialists in antisubmarine warfare, who spoke on condition they not be named, had been reported earlier to have suggested that the Navy might be forced to replace underwater listening devices placed in key spots to detect Soviet submarines.

On Soviet intelligence, Mr. Lehman said the Soviet Union had 2,000 officials in its embassy, consulates, trade missions and United Nations delegation in the United States, while the United States had only 900 in Moscow. He urged strict reciprocity, which would thus require more than 1,000 Soviet officials to leave the United States.

He said legislation was needed to make the death penalty possible for those convicted of espionage. The Soviet Union reported in May 1983 that it had executed Col. Oleg V. Penkovsky, a Soviet intelligence officer, for treason, including the passing of Soviet secrets to Britain and the United States.